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Quarters

published quarterly by the faculty of la salle college

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January, 1966

vol. XV, no. 2 • fifty cents

Still the Champion

• Jesse Stuart

Felix Leathers was in front of me climbing the narrow mountain path that was walled in with thickets of briars, grapevines, and sprouts. He had the groundhog hide strap that was fastened to each end of his long fox horn over his left shoulder and the fox horn rested against his ribs under his left arm. There was another groundhog hide strap over his right shoulder that went through the handle of a broom-necked two-gallon jug that swung around Felix's back as he waddled up the mountain like a big gander.

"This climbin' takes a body's wind," Felix said. He blew out a small hay-doodle of pale gray wind from each nostril. I could see his warm breath chill on the frosty-cool mountain air in my lantern light. "I'm hot as a July scorpion sunnin' on a mountain rock," Felix sighed.

"You ought to be gettin' along better than I am," I said. "You've got three big hound dogs to help pull you up the mountain, and you've got one hand free to pull yourself up by the sprouts along the path."

"You're right, Horace, but remember I've got this heavy jug too. Listen how I'm a-gettin' my breath now! I'm a-gettin' my breath hard as Peg Riley used to get his breath when he climbed this mountain on one good leg."

My two lean hounds walked in front of me, collared and fastened to one chain that I held in my right hand. In my left hand I carried the

lantern. I didn't have a hand free to grab a sprout and pull myself up the steep places along the path. My hounds were too lean to do much pulling.

"Watch my hounds pull," Felix said between his short breaths. "Your hounds need more meat on their frames! Hounds thin as razor blades can't help you up this mountain!"

Felix had three hounds, tall as weaned bull calves and fat as balls of butter, collared and fastened to one chain. They helped pull Felix up the mountain. They wanted to get on the mountain top to start the fox. My hounds didn't act like they cared about starting a fox. I had to step on their heels to keep them walking in front of me.

"Since Peg has gone from these mountains to a Happier Huntin' Ground, I aim to be the champion fox hunter of these mountains," Felix said.

"I'm not so shore about that," I said. The words left my mouth in a hurry. "I've got two lazy hounds here."

"All right, Horace," Felix said with a short breath of thin mountain air, "what can your old razorback hound dogs do with mine when you can't even keep 'em from under your feet?"

Felix laughed little short breath laughs at his own words. Then, he stopped laughing and gave long grunts as his fresh, well-fed hounds jerked him up the mountain path, making the chain rattle to mock the rustle of the leafless wild grapevines

entwined among the branches of the oaks and pines.

"Right here, Horace," Felix said. He stopped by a moss-covered cliff and lifted the groundhog hide strap from over his shoulder. "It's time we drink to Old Peg," he said.

"All right, I'm ready for a little snort," I said. "It will put new pep in me."

"Here's to Old Peg," Felix sighed as he lifted the jug. "I hope his hound dogs are a-leadin' the fox chases in th' Happy Huntin' Ground."

Felix held the jug to his lips.

Gurgle—gurgle—gurgle—gurgle—gurgle—gurgle!

He was slow to take the jug down from his lips.

"Ahm, it's good stuff," Felix said, running his tongue out, tasting and smacking his lips.

"Here's to Old Peg," I said. "I hope he gits good herbs in the Happy Huntin' Ground. I know how many times he's stopped to drink with us right here at this cliff."

And I held the jug to my lips and I drank to Old Peg. I thought of the many times we had emptied the jug when we had fox-hunted together on this mountain.

"I feel better," Felix said, as we started up the mountain.

"I feel more like a new man," I said.

Before we reached the mountain top, we stopped six more places under the roofs of the cliffs where we used to stop with Peg Riley to tip the jug. And as we drank, we thought of Old Peg, the Champion Fox Hunter with the fastest hounds that ever hit a cold trail among high razorback lines of these mountains. Old Peg was the best fox hunter who ever waddled up a mountain path on one good leg.

"Here's the place Peg said his

hounds could allus start the fox," Felix said. "Here is where he always uncollared his hounds."

"Old Peg was always right on anything about fox hunting," I said. I uncollared my razorback hound dogs.

The night started getting lonesome for me as I thought about the way Old Peg used to laugh when he reached the mountain top and uncollared his hounds. I remembered how he'd hit the jug and laugh louder than the blowing wind as soon as his hounds struck a cold trail. And if they hit a red-hot trail, he'd hit the jug harder and laugh louder than the wind blowing among the tall yellow pines on the mountain top.

"There's my Dellie," Felix said. Felix's Dellie let out a squealing bark that jarred the night silence on the mountain top. "There's my Scout and Drum! They've jined Dellie."

Then, Felix turned to me with his big lips curved in smile enough to show two rows of uneven teeth.

"Where's your razorbacks?" Felix asked. Then he laughed his big horse-laugh. He slapped at his thighs with his root-gnarled hands. "Where are your razorbacks, Horace?"

"Don't worry about my hounds, Felix," I said. "They'll be in there in a minute givin' your fat hounds all they can stand!"

"Oh, but I wish Old Peg was here with his hounds," Felix said as he swung the jug to his lips. "Here's to you, Peg. I hope you're somewhere a-listenin' to my hound a-runnin' the legs offen Horace's razorbacks! Peg, I believe I've got the hounds now that would run the legs off your Old Thunderbolt, Lightning Rod, and Trouble Maker."

Felix took a big swig, then he reached the jug to me, while he tasted and smacked his beardy lips.

"Here's to you, Peg," I said. "And here's to Goliath and Fleet, my razor-backed hounds!"

I hadn't more than got a good swig down and set the jug on the pine needles until I heard Goliath join the chase. He wasn't far behind Dellie, Drum, and Scout.

"Where's that other old razorback of yours?" Felix asked, as he patted his foot on the dry pine needles to the music of the barking hounds.

"Don't worry about old Fleet," I said. "She'll be there in a few minutes!"

"Wish Old Peg was here to hear this chase," Felix said. "I'd like for 'im to know the new Champion Fox Hunter since he left these mountains. I'd like for 'im to hear my Dellie lead th' chase."

Felix patted his foot to the music of the barking hounds while he tipped the jug and sipped slowly to get the good taste of the pure corn herbs.

"Listen to old Dellie," Felix sighed. He reached the jug to me and smacked his lips. "Dellie's a-settin' the mountain on fire!"

"You're a-hearin' things, Felix," I said.

"Almost outten hearin'," Felix said. "Come, let's hurry out the ridge to Holcomb's Knob."

Felix broke out in a run along the ridge path. He held our jug in his hand. He didn't take time to put the groundhog hide strap over his shoulder. I carried the lantern and trotted at his heels. We hurried toward Holcomb's Knob, the high peak on the end of the ridge, so we could hear our hounds as they drove the fox toward MacIntyre Mountain.

"Mountain Graveyard," Felix said. He stopped on the ridge path and looked back at me with staring eyes.

"What about it?" I asked. "Are you afraid?"

"Old Peg's buried here," Felix said.

"That's right," I said. "I forgot we had to pass the graveyard where Old Peg is buried."

"Here's to you, Peg, old boy," Felix said. He raised the jug to his trembling lips. "Hope you're a-listenin' to this chase."

While Felix gurgled from the jug, I looked at the rows of graves that covered an acre of flat ground on the mountain top. They had large brown mountain rocks chiseled out with frow-dull axes and wedges at the heads and little rough unhewn rocks at the foot of the rows where the dead had been planted. Some of the rocks had names and dates of births and deaths and about their being at rest or where they'd gone. Many of the graves just had plain rocks. But the big headstone near the path that had a hound dog chiseled on it was over Peg Riley's grave. I could see by the lantern light the words "Champion Fox Hunter of MacIntyre Mountain" had been chiseled on the headstone.

"Here's to you, Peg," I said. I took the jug from Felix and raised it to my lips. "You were the Champion Fox Hunter when you had to climb these mountains on one good leg! What if you'd a-had two good legs? I hope you have two good legs in the Happy Huntin' Ground."

Felix looked at me with tears in his eyes as he heard the music of his hounds and my Goliath trailing his three hounds. And when I spoke of two good legs for Old Peg, this touched Felix, for he'd seen Old Peg fall so many times when he hurried to Holcomb's Knob. He'd seen Peg fall over rocks and fences many times and get up and brush the dirt from

his clothes and laugh louder than the mountain wind sighing in the yellow pines with their tops among the clouds upon this high mountain.

"Let's hurry outten this graveyard," Felix said. "Hit makes me sad to be around where a feller like Old Peg is sleeping."

"All right. I feel the same way," I said.

We'd just got to the edge of the Hornbuckle Graveyard a mile out the ridge when I heard Goliath barking beside of Dellie.

"Listen to that, Felix," I said. I stopped on the path to listen. "You asked me about my dogs! Did you hear that?"

"But I ain't heard your Fleet bark tonight," Felix said.

"But you will hear her," I said. "You'll hear both of my razorbacks before this night is over."

Felix swung the jug to his lips.

"Don't drink here," I said. "The Hornbuckles might think you're a-drinkin' to 'em! You know about the trouble we Hindmans had with the Hornbuckles. I don't think enough of 'em to take a swig in their graveyard."

Before we reached Holcomb's Knob we talked about what a time the people had carrying the dead to the mountain top to bury them when it would have been easier and not half so much work to have buried them in some little bottom down in the valley. We talked about some of the big men and women, two and three hundred pounders, we had toted from the foot of the mountain up a path a mule couldn't climb to get them buried as near Heaven as we could. Felix said it was as near Heaven as some of them would ever get. We had a lot of lonesome talk, and I was ready for the jug again when we

reached the Pratt Graveyard right at the foot of Holcomb's Knob.

"I know we ain't a-goin' to drink near where a Pratt is buried," Felix said. "You know how many of my people they put in their graves. And we've put a hell of a lot of Pratts in their graves too!"

"Lonesome graves," I said. I looked at the little field rocks in rows at their heads and feet. "I wouldn't want to be buried here."

"You need a drink," Felix said. "But wait until we get upon the Knob away from these dead Pratts!"

We climbed over rocks, held to sprouts until we reached the top of the Knob. Now we could hear the hounds again. Dellie and Goliath were running side by side—first one and then the other broke into the lead. Drum and Scout were not far behind.

"Where's your Fleet?" Felix asked.

"Don't worry about her, Felix," I said. "She'll bark before the night is over."

"She's around here someplace asleep on a bed of leaves," Felix said as he lifted the jug to his lips.

"Here's to Dellie," Felix said before he put his lips over the jug's neck.

Felix took a long swig and then reached the jug to me.

"Here's to Fleet," I said. "And I hope Old Peg hears her when she does open up!"

"My but we're a-sinkin' that jug of herbs," Felix sighed. "I hope we have enough to last us through the night."

"Yes, we need herbs," I said. "I'm havin' a funny feelin' about Old Peg."

"I am too," Felix said. "I sometimes feel Old Peg's near us tonight. Sometimes I think I hear his good foot hittin' the ground with a wallop and his peg leg sinkin' into the dirt

a-makin' little cracklin' sounds like it useta when it broke through the leaves and dirt. Remember the sounds his good foot and his peg leg made as he run after the hounds?"

"Yes, I remember," I said. I tipped the jug again and then gave it back to Felix. "Have a swig."

"What good herbs," Felix said. "There is power in the wonderful herbs in this jug. Here's to Dellie—may she ever keep the lead!"

Woo—woo—woo—

"Listen to that, Felix," I said. I jumped up and clicked my heels together twice. "Listen, won't you!"

"What was that?" Felix asked, as he took the jug from his lips.

"Fleet—"

"Where is she?"

"A mile ahead of all the hounds."

"Hell's fire, but she's a-cuttin' dog—"

"No, she's been in there all the time," I said. "If she can't lead, she won't bark. I know when she's barkin' she's leadin' the pack. She's a proud hunter! I hope Old Peg heard that."

"I hope he didn't," Felix said. He put the big jug to his lips again. Gurggle—gurggle—gurggle! "Ahm—ahm—ahm."

"Your hounds can't outrun mine," I said. "And you can't swig more herbs than I can."

"Hounds are outten hearin'," Felix sighed. "We'll haf to go back the way we come if we want to hear 'em. They're on yan side of MacIntyre Mountain now."

We hurried down the fox path from the Knob, falling over rocks, getting up, and brushing the dirt from our clothes, then going on laughing just like Old Peg used to do.

"If Old Peg could fall and take it on one good leg," Felix said, "we

can surely fall and take it on two good legs."

We passed the Pratt Graveyard in a hurry. Before we passed the Hornbuckle Graveyard, we stopped and swigged a couple of times from the jug.

"Herbs are shore goin' down," Felix sighed. "We ought to keep a swig in the jug for Old Peg if we's to happen to meet 'im a-walkin' on this mountain ridge a-listenin' to the chase."

"He must be some place nigh us," I said. "Seems like I can just feel Old Peg near me! I thought I heard 'im laugh—but, maybe it was Fleet's barking!"

"Oh, no, not Fleet," Felix sighed. "You heard my Dellie!"

We hurried past the Hornbuckle Graveyard, for I was afraid I'd see Tim, Snoddie, and Buck Hornbuckle. I didn't want to see any of the boys I used to know that we had carried up the mountain and planted here. I needed another drink to steady my nerves.

"Look!" Felix said. He stopped still in the path just as we reached Mountain Graveyard.

"Is that Old Peg?" I asked. I felt my whole body tremble as I looked at a man who looked like the Old Champion. I hoped I wasn't looking at Old Peg standing there dressed in huntin' clothes that looked like those Old Peg used to wear. My heart beat faster than a humming-bird's wings as I looked at his brush-scarred boots, his brown tight fitting pants, his lumber jacket and corduroy cap.

"Peg," Felix spoke with a trembling voice. "How are you, Peg?"

"Peg, it's good to see you, Old Boy," I sighed. "Are you listenin' to my Fleet leadin' the pack home?"

She's the best foxhound that ever hit a fox trail on these mountains!"

The man didn't answer. He just stood there and laughed. He fondled the tips of his brown mustache with a big gnarled hand, like we had seen Old Peg do. He was holding three hounds that looked like Old Thunderbolt, Lightning Rod, and Trouble Maker. They were charging against their chains.

"Have a drink, Peg?" Felix asked.

The man laughed louder than I'd ever heard a man laugh. He was standing there with a long fox horn fastened around his shoulder with a groundhog strap and resting under his left arm, while his big razor-backed hounds rattled the dog chain as they charged to get in the chase.

"Turn your hounds loose, Peg, and Fleet will take care of 'em," I said.

I heard Fleet coming from MacIntyre Mountain. She was a mile ahead of the pack.

"His dogs are ghosts, Horace," Fe-

lix said in a loud voice. "Don't you see they can't bark! Look at Peg's two good legs! He's a speret!"

I went over the left side of the mountain ridge with the lantern, while Felix took over the right side with the jug. I heard Felix shooting his pistol somewhere over the mountain as I ran like a turkey. All the time I was trying to get down off the mountain, I heard my Fleet leading the pack. And every time I stumbled and fell, I'd say: "I can take it same as Old Peg used to take it." I'd get up, brush the dirt off my clothes, and try to laugh like Old Peg, for I was now the New Champion. I don't remember how I got home. I do know my razorback Fleet was running the fox next day at sundown. She was running the fox by herself, too. But I would be afraid to say she was better than Peg's Thunderbolt, Lightning Rod, and Trouble Maker as long as his dust was sleeping upon the mountain.

Skimmers

• Paul Baker Newman

Where you see the undersides of their wings
the whole mass is white and flickering in the sunlight
above the sandbar and the blue water of the sound
and you can hear them crying and protesting
in the cool sea wind that blows across the channel
and where the rest of them are turning toward you
they are all black and flickering in the sunlight
and they go swinging in a long Cartesian figure
like a twisted plane that lets you see its outlines
by its colors, the one half white and tilting away,
and the other half black and tilting toward you,
as they swing into the air and call you all the names
they can think of in the time it takes to rise
and get away, loping on their long black wings
leisurely toward the sound behind the islands.

The Lodge Pin

• Olivia Davis

In all the suburbs, outside all the cities, the wives had gone shopping at the supermarkets, and the husbands were mowing the lawns. It was fall, one of the last times the mowing would need to be done. A Saturday morning, with a slight breeze blowing, cooling the faces and the armpits, ballooning out the sportshirts.

Hal Wakefield felt some slight answering stir within himself. It occurred to him that he hadn't made use of the summer, that soon the weather would change and he would be condemned to a life indoors, and he probably wouldn't make much use of the winter either. There was a lot to be said for fall. This was the kind of day that made him feel like going for a long walk, or would have, if there had been anywhere to walk to. But the subdivision spread wide in all directions, and Hal, carefully guiding the lawn mower against the chrysanthemums banked beneath the foundation plantings—four *lugarum*, three *arborvitae*, two red cedars—wondered if anyone else found the name *Glendale Woods* as irritating as he did.

It had been wooded country once, but after the bulldozers had got through, no one could tell whether it had been a glen or a dale, and maybe the two words meant the same thing anyway. The whole area looked exactly like Sunnyridge Hills, two or three miles down the road, though the houses were slightly different.

And Sunnyridge Hills had been a completely flat piece of farmland, whatever the ads might say about rolling countryside. It hadn't rolled, it had simply spread out, part of the plain that lay between here and the river. In the old days, Hal supposed, you might have climbed a little rise, hidden now in the man-made topography of Glendale Woods but probably about where the shopping center is, and actually seen the river, gleaming in the distance. You might have packed a lunch and walked to its banks, seven miles away. Walked through the flat fields, beside the fences and hedges, past the farmhouses.

Just lately Hal had seen a print, an old wood engraving. It was part of an advertisement in the paper for the sale of men's casual clothing. It showed two men fishing from a river bank. They wore broadrimmed hats, loose jackets, knee pants, and stockings. One of them lay on the ground and leaned on his elbow. The other, with a hare dangling from his pocket, leaned against a tree. They looked comfortable and as though they had all the time in the world. At the bottom of the picture, Hal could almost decipher a tiny signature. Thomas Something. Thomas was a friend, Hal thought. Obscurely saddened by the thought of the two men—they were quite real to him—folded now in his billfold, for he had torn the picture out of the paper and put it away, he pushed the lawn mower in a little too

close and nicked the head off a chrysanthemum.

He picked it up, pungent smelling, heavy headed, yellow petaled, and put it in his pocket. He would throw it away before Betsy got back from the supermarket, and she'd never miss it. It was another of the small things he kept from her.

More and more he kept things from her. Like what he felt about the children, about Jenny's marriage and John's being gone at college. About how he felt lonely and sad, and old, maneuvering the lawn mower in and out. About all the things he had wanted to do and knew now he never would, and knew his children wouldn't do them either and didn't even want to. Every time he read of a place that interested him, he added it to a secret list in his mind. Places I Would Like To See Before I Die. He had never seen the Shiant Isles, the dashing waves beneath the rearing cliffs, never rested in an Alpine meadow, never stood on the banks of the Amazon. He sighed deeply, and his thoughts went to his daughter.

He had had such hopes for Jenny. They had given her music lessons because it was the thing to do. "Though, mind you," said Betsy, "it's just while she shows an interest. The minute she starts arguing about practising, that's when we quit." But to the surprise of both of them, Jenny hadn't argued. She had practised faithfully, and her teacher said she had great talent. Only a year or so before, when Hal heard the crashing chords beneath her fingers, he had seen her at Salzburg, reverently touching Mozart's clavichord despite the velvet rope and all the notices. He heard her in Bayreuth, arguing during an intermission of the opera *Parsifal*, speaking German with a group of students. He saw

her wearing woolen stockings and a short skirt, tramping over the mountains, and this seemed to him the best vision of all.

All these things might have happened, but Jenny had married. Her husband, Bob, was doing all right, of course. There was nothing to worry about. They had met in Pittsburgh, where Jenny was studying, and Bob had been doing all right even then, working in his father's automobile agency, and now he had set up for himself and come along just fine. They were living in an apartment on the other side of town and were saving up for a down payment on one of the houses in Sunnyside Hills. Betsy was just tickled about it, and Hal knew he should be pleased. Instead, and dumbly, he resented it. Their lives seemed to be following such a pattern. There was none of the embroidery he had hoped for. And even though he and Betsy had given Jenny a baby grand of her own for a wedding present, she hardly ever played any more, except college songs when a group of young people came over.

He didn't understand Jenny, and he didn't understand himself. He felt they had been a great deal too anxious to see her married, as though there was nothing better in life for a girl than to marry the first possible young man who came along. Nothing better for the young man, if it came to that, than to find a little wife and have a little baby and put them both in a little box in Sunnyside Hills, Glendale Woods, Shadey Acres, Forest Lawn Estates.

Maybe it would have been better if Jenny and Bob had just had an affair for a while and got it out of their systems. Hal blushed in the light wind and ran his handkerchief

around the back of his neck, because he had just had a thought that if it weren't immoral he didn't know what it was; he knew how Betsy would feel if he should say it out loud. But he couldn't help thinking it, he told himself defiantly, and put away his handkerchief. And wasn't a love affair, happy or unhappy, less narrowing for a person than marriage in a vacuum? Cut and dried marriage? Assembly line marriage? At least you *knew* when it was over, and you had an experience you could think about and learn from. And there were a lot of worries you didn't have, like its *never* being over, or if it were, the sharing out of furniture, Hi-Fi records, and children, too, maybe. And Jenny could have gone back to college and been the success he had always hoped she would be, instead of just sitting around singing college songs with a lot of other young marrieds.

These were thoughts he had to keep from Betsy, had to keep in his own head, pushing the lawn mower back and forth under the maple trees at the back of the house, because no one would be on his side in an argument like that. They would all be on the other side, the side he'd read about in a book by an explorer. The most important thing in life, wrote the explorer, was the creation of a happy family life. He had described for hundreds of pages the extraordinary pleasures of discovering new parts of the world, of having been the first man to set eyes on this valley or that mountain. And then he had said that none of it was important. Compared with a happy family life, nothing weighed in the scales, not a career, not adventure nor discovery, certainly not a man himself.

Hal crossed the frozen wastes of Antarctica off his list at that. He didn't want to go where that man had been.

He saw that Joe Durham, who lived across the street, was mowing his lawn too and had stopped to wave to him. He waved back and grinned uncomfortably, wondering if Joe had seen him put the chrysanthemum in his pocket. It seemed like a funny thing to do. After all, he could have taken it inside and put it in a glass of water.

He went on mowing at the same moment Joe did, thinking how strange it was that though he knew everybody who lived around him and they all knew him, he was lonely all the same. It seemed to Hal sometimes that something had gone wrong with his life. He couldn't think what it could be. It wasn't anything you could put your finger on, and whatever it was, no one else seemed to feel it, though his life was just the same as theirs. He had, quite often, the sensation of being a stranger in a foreign country, of their ways not being his ways, yet of not being able to identify the country he was in. Sometimes he actually felt the *excitement* and the difference of being in a foreign country, as though the smells, the heat, the dust of Glendale Woods were all strange to him. When he got caught up in the great traffic jam going into the city each morning, he was sometimes visited by the same sense of strangeness and aloneness. Where was everyone going? Where had they come from? The only compensation was that as he wove in and out of the traffic, shifting from the right to the left lane at exactly the right moment, he felt he was pretty well acclimatized, considering that he was a stranger. He could

drive as well as they could.

What was the difference? In his childhood he had walked to school, just as they had. His life had the same beginnings as theirs; none of this yellow bus nonsense. Everyone had done it. They sometimes vied with each other, talking about how far they had walked and how deep the snow had been, agreeing that nowadays children were soft, didn't know how well off they were.

"I was about to get frostbitten once," he had said just the other night. They were sitting out on the patio, one of the last times they would do it now that summer was gone, the husbands and wives from this small corner of the subdivision drinking beer. Every now and then someone got up and left to check on sleeping children.

"I was walking along the lane from school, and the snow was this deep." He held his hand out, palm down, to indicate just how deep. "Well, maybe not that high, but over my head anyway. I couldn't have been more than six years old. I know I'd just started school. I was so cold, and I was walking slower and slower, just hoping, you know, that someone would come and get me, just about ready to lie down in the snow and go to sleep. And then the door to this house opened and a woman came out and made me go inside with her. She had a great big fire going, and there was a cat with some kittens in a basket. She wouldn't let me go near the fireplace, but she gave me some cookies. And then you know what she did? She took off my shoes and socks and stuck my feet in a bucket of ice water. I thought she was a witch." He felt foolish when he'd finished the story because he felt

there was some significance in it, that he'd come so close to getting frostbitten feet and been so shocked by the cure, but the others didn't seem to get it. They just laughed and said they'd never heard of ice water as a cure for frostbite.

The lawn mower hit a rock, and Hal swore. He'd given the next-door youngster fifty cents to go over the lawn and throw out every rock he found and anything else that shouldn't be there. The house was on a corner, and sometimes there were beer cans thrown on the front lawn. Teen-agers driving by at night. Sometimes they threw beer cans, paper cups—all kinds of trash—right on the front lawn. They took the corner so fast, often he woke up in the night and heard them screech by. He lived in fear that someday one of them would drive right across his yard and smash into the corner of the house. Brick veneer. It wouldn't take a crash like that. He could see it clearly, his house with a great hole in it, and the upper floor sagging into the lower; beds and chests of drawers sliding out into the foundation plantings, broken bricks strewn about. He didn't know what he would do if a thing like that happened.

Throwing the rock out into the street, he wondered if he'd been the same when he was young. He was almost sure he hadn't. It seemed to him that about that time, just about the time he went to college, he'd been quick, intelligent, full of power, seeking and finding. He thought he'd never been so alert since. And the long winters. He had made use of the winters in those days, gone skiing and skating. Gone on sledding parties and studied in a cold room. The girls, the

girls were different then, too. Rosier, rounder. Their cute little fur hats, their mittened hands.

He came to the place on the lawn where the telescope had stood. Packed away in the basement now, it belonged to his son, John. A telescope was the thing to give your boy, right after Sputnik. Everyone had one, even little kids, and Hal made sure he got a good one. A book on astronomy came with it, with charts that told you when you could see the different constellations. He and John had set the tripod up on the lawn in front of the living room window.

"I had a telescope once," Hal told his son, "an old mariner's telescope. I used to sit on the window seat in my room and stare at the sky for hours."

"You couldn't have seen much," said John, efficient, turning screws this way and that. "Not with an old instrument like that. What were you looking for?"

"I don't know," said Hal. "God, maybe." He was suddenly annoyed with the new telescope, a sinister and clinical looking object, compared with the worn, familiar, brassbound instrument of his childhood.

For a few nights John was sufficiently interested to spend an hour or so identifying the planets and looking at the craters on the moon.

"Say, Dad, this is a pretty good telescope!" he said, as though Hal had bought a good one by accident. Then he took to lowering the telescope to bring the house of a friend up the street leaping into his eye. He said he could see Mike, his best friend, studying in a pair of green-striped pajamas. He said Mike had a new desk lamp with a gooseneck, and could he have one too. John

meant no harm, but it was the sort of thing you got arrested for, Hal thought uneasily, and he was glad when John lost interest in the telescope. Then he himself took it up, and he found Saturn. Saturn, with his silver rings, floating high in blackness, in lonely majesty. Cold with a cold unimagined, taking twenty-nine years to circle the sun. He watched it for a long time, spellbound.

"It looks like—like a lodge pin, set in black velvet," he told John, trying to impart some of his enthusiasm. And it did. A lodge pin, the emblem of some godly fraternity, there in the sky. But John was bored, looked through the telescope in a perfunctory fashion, and nodded his head briefly. Hal wasn't sure that John had even seen Saturn. Surely no one who had, could tear himself away so soon? Cold, cold, ringed with silver and very far away. And, yet *Saturnia Regna*. The Golden Age, filled with all delights. Saturn had been thrown out of heaven by his son, Jupiter, and gone to Italy and reigned there. Hal heaved a great sigh when he thought of this.

Joe Durham came over one night to ask him if they could see Echo, but it moved too fast, and they watched it for a while without bothering with the telescope, which stood like a black finger on three legs, pointing bleakly at the sky.

"Isn't that something?" said Joe. "I guess the old U.S.A. has something after all."

"Yeah," said Hal. He wondered why he couldn't feel as enthusiastic about the satellite as other people did. It didn't seem to have too much to do with him, somehow, though in another way it had too much to do with him and was another worry added to all the rest. One day the sky would

be so full of the damned things you wouldn't be able to see the stars. They would have to have traffic rules. This way around. Do not pass. Seven spacemen killed on this curve in 1970.

When Joe went back across the street, Hal took another look at Saturn and found its lonely state soothing and wonderful.

He had finished doing the lawn now and put the lawn mower away, just as Betsy drove up the driveway. He opened the door for her, and together they carried the grocery bags into the kitchen, and he washed his hands at the sink while she put things away. He was very conscious of the chrysanthemum in his pocket, feeling like a secret drinker come upon with a half full glass still to dispose of, and he wished Betsy would go out, turn her back for a minute so that he could get rid of it. When she went out to the car to get something she had forgotten, he dropped it in the trash and covered it with a crumpled paper bag, wondering why he couldn't tell her quite simply and easily that he had cut the head off one of the flowers or, better yet, hand it to her and say he had picked it especially for her. A memory stirred in him of having done the same thing in his childhood. Pulled the head off a flower and given it with a smile to his exasperated mother. The truth was, he thought, as Betsy came back into the kitchen, that he didn't want to hear what she had to say. He was fond of her, but he didn't much like to hear her talk about anything.

She was talking now about John, saying she would bake up a batch of cookies and send them to him; she was sure he must be starved, she knew how haphazard he was about eating. A hamburger here, a milk

shake there; that was no way to keep healthy.

"Cookies?" said Hal. "According to you, what he needs is a steak dinner. Preferably three times a day."

"Well, I know," said Betsy. She smiled the smile that had wrung him in his youth, irritated him in the present. Acknowledging her fault. "But they'll fill him up. That's better than nothing." She made coffee and sank down opposite Hal at the kitchen table.

"You finished the lawn."

"Yeah," said Hal.

"I was beginning to get worried," said Betsy. "You know how the next-door people are about windblown seeds."

"The grass wasn't that high."

"You got it just in time," she said. Over her coffee cup her eyes roved about the kitchen. "It's quiet. Quiet without the children. Nobody here but us, I mean." Hal nodded without speaking, and she smiled and touched his hand.

"It's like old times," she said. "As we were."

"As we were," said Hal.

"We've got a lot to be proud of," said Betsy. "Both of them gone and settled. You hear so much about wild kids nowadays. I say we have a lot to be proud of." There was a slight reprimand in her voice.

"I am," said Hal. Was he?

"You don't sound very proud," said Betsy. She cleared away the coffee cups with small annoyed movements. "I don't know what you want out of life, Hal. Sometimes I just don't understand you." He didn't particularly want to be understood, but he felt panic all the same.

"The revolt of the middle-aged man," he offered, and when she failed to smile, "it's the title of a

book." And hastily, in case she should think he had been seduced by unsuitable literature, "I didn't read it."

"You used to have so much pep," said Betsy. "New ideas all the time." She shook her head and suddenly smiled, wringing out a dishcloth over the sink. "Wore me out, almost. I guess I shouldn't complain, just so long as you don't start chasing around after any young women." The smile was beamed directly at him, inviting him to share the joke, and Hal was quite startled. It occurred to him that he hadn't seen any young women around, not for years now, except his own daughter of course, and where had they all gone to?

"Now, Betsy," he said. She wiped the sink top, while his mind dredged up one young woman after another and discharged them, while he thought there was a whole facet of life he had never really thought to explore.

"You could fix the washing machine," said Betsy. "It jiggles all over the floor. You could level it."

"Sure," said Hal.

"Jenny and Bob are coming over tomorrow for Sunday dinner," she said. "I think Jenny's got some news for us."

"A baby?"

Betsy nodded, smiling.

"Well, how do you like that?"

"There's a whole trunkful of old things of Jenny's down in the basement. Toys, baby clothes, and things. I wish you'd get it out for me, Hal. I told Jenny she should look through it and take some of those things for the baby."

Hal went down to the basement and got a screwdriver off the bench. He opened up the door to the crawl space

under the house, which they used for storage since there was no attic, and hauled out the old trunk. It slipped from his grasp as he was setting it down on the floor, and the snap lock flew up. Idly, Hal lifted the lid and looked down at the contents. Glimpses of lace, white cotton, pink and blue woolly things. A teddy bear and two or three dolls. A Monopoly set, a shell collection, and a microscope. He stood looking down at it. It had hardly been used. He'd given it to Jenny when she was in the eighth grade, or thereabouts, so she could do a project for the school Science Fair. Something to do with animal hair, he thought. He'd taken Jenny to the zoo and daringly plucked at a monkey's fur for her. A tuft had come away in his hand as though he'd pulled it from an old fur coat, and she had added it to her collection of specimens. When they looked at the monkey's fur under the microscope, they found it was full of tiny insects and even tinier eggs.

"Parasites," said Hal. Betsy made a noise of disgust.

"Lice," she said. "Throw the dirty stuff away. Burn it."

"And I suppose those parasites have parasites on *them*," said Hal. "And on and on. Too small to be seen even by the most powerful microscope. And even in the smallest one there are millions of atoms, spinning around, that make up its shape."

He was fascinated by the idea, and it had given rise to another one. It had rather frightened him, and he didn't say anything about it until one evening when he heard Jenny and John arguing about religion.

"So every word in the Bible is true," scoffed John. "And Abraham lived to be eight hundred years old, and the Red Sea parted down the

middle just to let the Jews out of Egypt. Nobody believes that stuff any more."

"That's not a nice way to talk, John," said Betsy.

"Some people do," said Jenny. "Thousands of them. They can't all be wrong."

"Thousands of people can be just as wrong as one person," said John loftily. "Science has disproved the Bible. Certain things just can't happen. Don't you believe in the laws of nature?"

"God exists," said Hal, suddenly.

"Of course," said Betsy, relieved. "Foolish nonsense."

"But I wonder if He knows *we* exist," said Hal, and the children looked at him. "I wonder if He's discovered us yet. Have you ever thought about how small we are? I mean, when you look up at the sky, have you ever thought that? When you look at Saturn, say?"

"The one you said looked like a lodge pin," said John. If he was being sarcastic, Hal didn't notice.

"That's exactly it. And then, when you look into the microscope, have you ever thought how *big* we are? Can you imagine that the entire universe might be no bigger than a lodge pin? Smaller, even. A little diamond chip that God wears." They looked puzzled and a little bored. Betsy, knitting, wasn't even listening.

"Oh, Dad," said John. Hal shrugged.

"Just an idea," he said. He could have put it much better, he thought. There wasn't necessarily any end to it either. There might be a God a million times greater than God.

"Did you get the trunk out?" said Betsy. She came down the basement

steps. "Oh, look at that!" she exclaimed and knelt lovingly beside the shrine of Jenny's childhood. She took out one of the knitted jackets and held it to her face. "Just as soft. You'd think it was bought yesterday. And all those little gowns. Jenny won't have to get many new things."

"Toys too," said Hal. "He can play with those. Some of them, anyway," disparaging the dolls.

"It might be a girl."

"Yeah. Fifty-fifty. Could be either one. You want me to leave the trunk right here?"

"Why don't you? And Jenny can take out whatever she wants."

"I don't guess she'll want this," said Hal, and picked up the microscope. "You know, I think I'll take this upstairs. And John's old telescope, too."

"You don't want that stuff," said Betsy. "Where will you put it? It'll just sit around, gathering dust."

"It's going to do that in the crawl space," said Hal. "Maybe we should sell those things. Or give them away."

"Oh, well" said Betsy vaguely. She started up the stairs. "Leave them where they are. They might come in useful sometime."

And that was an example of real clear thinking, Hal thought, as he screwed the door back in place and closed the lid of the trunk. What kind of usefulness did she have in mind, and who would use the telescope and the microscope if he didn't and she didn't and John and Jenny didn't? But he didn't fret himself about it. It was the kind of thing that happened every day.

And when we've blown ourselves up, he thought, continuing the idea he had had before, God won't even

notice. There'll just be the smallest possible flaw in the diamond.

Late that night he was roused from sleep by a long remembered sound. Raising himself on an elbow, his spirits rose and followed. It was the night wind, harbinger of winter, sweeping down over the mountains of his childhood, rushing over the tops of enormous trees. For a moment he

thought he was, after all, an inhabitant of a mysterious and beautiful world. But the sound altered, changed, and died away. Long before it had ceased altogether, Hal knew he was listening to a train rumbling over a distant bridge. He sank back into sleep, an unimportant man in a dark suburban bedroom, conveniently close to the shopping center, the highway, and the railroad station.

Of Grace and Bone

• Anne Hazlewood Brady

Long after these men had died in war
And grief had slipped into sadness
We, with our formal feelings, assembled
On the green of just mown grass.
Something of gifts and of time unwasted,
In the lines something of grace and stone,
Of marble stairs to be worn by use
In this building built to last.

From curtained windows looking down
Out of a world of books and thought
Students lingered briefly at the glass;
Something of encounter here
In those not quite clear reflections
From where we sat under the tent
Among frail figures with ramrod eyes
That only the long life makes clear.

As in your face, enrapt, my father,
In the lines something of grace and bone
As if in each man's hold on life
There is an only son, an only name
Written in the veins of the hand,
Silenced in the throat of time
While love like a thousand needles
Is plunged in the blood's memory.

Three Poems

● Paul Ramsey

The Circus Is Not Far Away

The circus soon. The mind drags
Childward, put upon, and slow.
It goes, does not want to go,
And yet arrives where time lags
In the bright disastrous air
Of an old and a known place
Mind would prefer not to face.
Do black horses tread that glare?
The manes flash and they are there.

Directions for an Undertaking

To walk away.
Remiss hands let you go.
The tracks emerge, to cry or part!
To hesitate is where you start
To walk away,
To see a rivershack,
Its tenants and its windows gone.
To see a rusting that is cold
On boilers in an empty field.
Bicycle tracks in the hard mud.
A railroad span you fear to cross.
A twilight bird rushes past.
The settling in of mist on oak.
A carlight burning in the fog.
To walk away
Into a cold and level wind
That lets the damp of sweat go chill.
Elsewhere violences take place,
And in some street you expect they will
Be overtakers, or be near.
You stand as lonesome as a star.
To walk away is where you are.

The Denial

• Paul Ramsey

Calamity. It was that.
Some sensed
under the ordinary rain
the different slash off cold,
the withering underneath
of the stream beds, the hardened roots
under the stream beds, the earth underneath.
They said nothing, lax in their fear all day.

By nightfall, the fire—
growing out of the pleasant declining of the sun,
spreading into light and air and into earth,
up root tips, up sap ways, up branches
withering, starving, wasting rapidly what it touched.
Some scented the oddness of the smoke,
but turned back to their tasks, claiming
that they had their jobs to do, idling at them normally.

By morning the fire and the cold met.
Strangers would not shovel out cars for each other,
in the deep snow refusing the sweating trial
thinking of hernia and heart strain.
Then friends walked apart.
Then families withdrew into separate rooms.
It was not long before people turned away from their individual mirrors
soon afterward forgetting that they had refused identity
at the first.

The city continued as usual,
the factories smoking, the glassed offices shining
in the rainfall, the file drawers closing on the hands that fed them.
The perfect orbiting of the moon stirred no comment.
Advertisements provoked no angry and no amused response.
No one felt the cold and the fire and the dark.

Only the chipmunks chattered out the glory of their love
in the untended mountains.

Henry James: Action and the Art of Life

• Brother Joseph Wiesenfarth, F.S.C.

It was in that moment's flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. Such she often felt herself—struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: "But this is what I see," and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her.

—*To the Lighthouse*,
Virginia Woolf

At the end of the preface to *The Ambassadors*, Henry James wrote: "The novel remains still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms."¹ I make no pretense of doing justice to the complexity and variety of the novel form in this essay but hope only to suggest why the novel is so prodigious and elastic and independent by discussing two novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Portrait of a Lady*. By directing attention to certain aspects of these novels, I want to suggest that the individual and the society he lives in are represented as continuously in dialogue in the history of the novel, and that a changing conception either of the individual or of the society accounts for the multiplicity of forms in which the novel has come and still comes to us, its readers. Moreover, I want to suggest that when Henry James took up the trade of novelist, he depicted a social situation so totally different from the one Jane Austen dramatized, and saw individual human destiny in a way so radically different from her that he not only presented different concepts of value but also his own techniques for dramatizing them. I hope to show, in consequence, not simply that *The Portrait of a Lady* is a very different kind of novel from *Pride and Prejudice* but why it is so different and what the meaning of the difference is.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel that has a carefully constructed plot. The love affair of Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley begins directly with their first meeting and ends suddenly with Bingley's departure for London. The bad manners of Darcy show themselves at the first Meryton ball, and Elizabeth dislikes him from that moment. Simultaneously, her disaffection for Darcy increases as her admiration for Wickham, who reports himself wronged by Darcy, grows. With as much care as Jane Austen develops Jane's admiration for Bingley and Elizabeth's dislike of Darcy and affection

for Wickham, she dramatizes the general insensibility of the other members of the Bennet family, especially Mrs. Bennet. This series of thematic actions is carefully brought to a climax in Chapter 34 when Darcy visits Hunsford parsonage and proposes marriage to the startled and unbelieving Elizabeth. The proposal comes as a surprise to Elizabeth; only Fitzwilliam Darcy's pride in making it fits the pattern of life that Elizabeth has experienced. Elizabeth cannot understand why a man she dislikes should like her so much. Therefore she is at pains to make clear the reasons for her refusal. She lays before Darcy the faults she believes to be his: his preventing Wickham from receiving a bequest from the late Mr. Darcy and his separating Bingley from Jane and preventing their marriage; also, Elizabeth charges that Darcy's manners—as his proposal has just shown—are ungentlemanlike. Darcy's indignation is stirred by Elizabeth's elaborate refusal, and before he leaves, he declares that he found the utmost difficulty, in spite of his affection, in proposing to a girl whose family was so preposterously uncivil.

Before Darcy leaves Elizabeth, the lines of the story have been drawn in a hard-and-fast pattern. Before the novel can come to a close, these four problems raised between Darcy and Elizabeth must be solved. The remainder of *Pride and Prejudice* is dedicated to their solution. As Darcy walks out the door, the novel's long beginning comes to a close.

The middle of the novel opens with Darcy's letter to Elizabeth, in which he addresses himself to two of the accusations she brought against him. In the most reasonable and logical terms, he justifies his separation of Bingley from Jane and his conduct toward Wickham. In a moment of startling insight and self-revelation, Elizabeth sees what a prejudiced witness to events she has been.

She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.

“How despicably have I acted!” she cried. “I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities; who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable distrust. How humiliating is this discovery! Yet how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself.

Now only two problems remain: those of Darcy's conduct and of the improprieties of the Bennet family. When Elizabeth and the Gardiners visit Pemberley and Darcy appears on the scene, he appears as a man transformed. He has become the true gentleman. And he remains the true gentleman as the novel harks back to Wickham and to Jane and Bingley. For Darcy saves

Lydia from disgrace by conferring a considerable amount of money on Wickham, and he sees to it that Bingley returns to Jane. Finally, Darcy himself comes among the Bennet family for the first time and proposes to Elizabeth, who accepts him.

The ending of the novel requires only the acceptance by others of the Elizabeth-Darcy match. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet concur in it, and before the last word is written, even Lady Catherine de Bourgh becomes reconciled to the marriage.

Pride and Prejudice is clearly a novel with a plot. There is "outward complication of incident," there is a sense of a "weaving together" of incidents and the feeling that "a much tangled web" has been untangled.² When Henry James came to write his novels, he did not conceive of their construction in this way.

For James, a plot was a "nefarious name, in any flash, upon the fancy of a set of relations." James contended that his novels did not have plots, but rather "actions" which developed "subjects."³ "I might envy," James wrote, "though I couldn't emulate the imaginative writer so constituted as to see his fable first and to make out its agents afterwards . . ." Therefore in *The Portrait of a Lady*, the character of Isabel Archer came first and all else afterwards. When James describes *The Portrait* as something constructed, he describes it as a building, and he says that his subject—"a certain young woman affronting her destiny"—is its "single, small cornerstone." He can do nothing until Isabel Archer is in place. Once she is placed, all else rests on her. Therefore, in another phrase, *The Portrait of a Lady* is an "ado about Isabel Archer."

To James, the novel was also "a personal, a direct impression of life," the value of which is "greater or less according to the intensity of the impression."⁴ If *The Portrait* was to be an ado about Isabel Archer, one way of giving a personal, direct impression of life would be to concentrate on her life alone and her sense of what she has made of her life. In consequence, as James constructed his novel, he focused attention on Isabel in two ways. He made her the compositional center of the entire novel, and, at times, he made her the center of vision in the novel. A compositional center was the same for James as it was for Tolstoi: "some place where all the rays meet or from which they issue."⁵ The structure of *The Portrait of a Lady* makes pellucidly clear that Isabel Archer is such a compositional center.

The characters in *The Portrait* minister to Isabel's importance. Mrs. Touchett takes her from Albany and brings her to Europe. Ralph Touchett convinces his father to make Isabel an heiress, and Mr. Touchett leaves her seventy thousand pounds. Caspar Goodwood crosses the Atlantic several times to propose to her. Lord Warburton comes to Gardencourt and goes to Rome to ask her hand in marriage. Madame Merle selects Isabel to be the wife of Gilbert Osmond and the mother of Pansy, her own illegitimate daughter. Osmond rouses himself from his accustomed lethargy to seek Isabel's love and fortune. Ralph goes to Italy at the risk of his life simply to see how Isabel gets on. Clearly, the significance of each character in *The Portrait of a Lady* is determined by his reaction to the principal character, Isabel Archer.

Isabel is at times a center of vision as well as the compositional center

of the novel. It is necessary that we occasionally see the events in her life and her mental, moral, and emotional reaction to them just as she sees them. If the novel is to be a personal and direct impression of life, the reader must see events as Isabel does. There are many instances in which Isabel reflects on the opportunities life has presented her and her choices among these opportunities. But the most significant one for James and Isabel and the reader occurs in Chapter 42. Here Isabel sees that she has made a loveless marriage, that of the choices open to her she has made the wrong one, that in seeking a life large and free, she has found one filled with stifling conventionality.

It had come gradually—it was not till the first year of their life together, so admirably intimate at first, had closed that she had taken the alarm. Then the shadows had begun to gather; it was as if Osmond deliberately, almost malignantly, had put the lights out one by one. The dusk at first was vague and thin, and she could still see her way in it. But it steadily deepened, and if now and again it had occasionally lifted there were certain corners of her prospect that were impenetrably black. These shadows were not an emanation from her own mind: she was very sure of that; she had done her best to be just and temperate, to see only the truth. They were a part, they were a kind of creation and consequence, of her husband's very presence. They were not his misdeeds, his turpitudes; she accused him of nothing—that is but of one thing, which was not a crime. She knew of no wrong he had done; he was not violent, he was not cruel: she simply believed he hated her.⁶

For James, Isabel's seeing the meaning of her life—at this moment, at other moments in the chapter, and at different times in the novel as a whole—constitutes the excitement of the novel. These moments of vision in Chapter 42 are for James “a representation simply of her motionlessly *seeing*, and an attempt withal to make the mere still lucidity of her act as ‘interesting’ as the surprise of a caravan or the identification of a pirate.” Isabel's seeing the meaning of the life she has made for herself constitutes the excitement of the novel, and her sense or vision of the things that have happened becomes the action of the novel itself. The more she sees, the freer she is to choose. And each choice, made in light of greater knowledge and increased responsibility, becomes more exciting than the last. This is why Isabel's final choice is the most dramatic one in the novel and why, indeed, it is the final one as well.

The structure of *The Portrait of a Lady* moves toward and away from Isabel's choices, which become more weighted with knowledge and responsibility as she moves from one to another. To set his novel in motion and to keep it going to the end, James asks a simple question of Isabel Archer: “What will she do?” The action of the novel clusters around the series of choices that Isabel makes in situations which define the intellectual, moral, and emotional

value of her decisions. For instance, at Gardencourt, the poor but free Isabel Archer refuses to marry the wealthy Lord Warburton because, as his wife, her life would be too conventional. Shortly after, in London, she refuses to marry the passionate and wealthy American businessman, Caspar Goodwood, for with him, too, life would be too limited. The novel slowly moves from this set of choices, introduces Madame Merle, shows Isabel becoming wealthy, and broadening her experience of life by travel with Mrs. Touchett. In Rome she makes her second significant set of choices. She once again refuses Warburton—a year of travel intervenes and is rapidly over—she engages herself to marry Gilbert Osmond, and she refuses to break her engagement to satisfy Goodwood's love. Even the advice of Ralph Touchett, her unknown benefactor whom she deeply loves, is distasteful to her and disregarded by her. Isabel, rich and free, importuned but decisive, will choose for herself, and she chooses Osmond. The action moves away from this set of choices, and three years quickly elapse. Isabel has come to the realization that her choice was wrong by the time Warburton returns to Rome, still in love with Isabel—though thinking himself in love with Pansy Osmond. Goodwood crosses the Atlantic again to look in on Isabel. Ralph is in Rome too, there at the risk of his life to give his sympathy. Now, however, Warburton, Goodwood, and Ralph are shut from Isabel's life. She is married and will accept the love of no other man than Osmond; she has chosen her lot and will not complain to Ralph. With the choice of a consort closed to her, her humanity is tested as the novel moves to two more crucial choices that Isabel can make.

Osmond insists that Isabel see to it that Lord Warburton propose to Pansy. Isabel, however, sees only that Pansy obey her father, as her filial love demands. Warburton is subtly brought by Isabel to a sensitive realization that he must not offer marriage to a girl who loves another, Edward Rosier, not him. By doing what she does, Isabel makes her own life with Osmond more difficult and places a greater burden of responsibility upon herself when she chooses, against Osmond's explicit wishes, to go to Gardencourt and be with Ralph in his dying moments.

There at Gardencourt, the decision she has made to leave Rome to see Ralph offers her the final set of choices in the novel. Warburton is again near at hand. Goodwood again appears. In this brilliant last scene with Goodwood, Isabel experiences that passionate love that Osmond has been unable to give her. She understands finally what it means really to be loved.

He glared at her a moment through the dusk, and the next instant she felt his arms about her and his lips on her own lips. His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed; and it was extraordinarily as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession. So had she heard of those wrecked and under water following a train of images before they sink. But when darkness returned, she was free.

Isabel, completely aware of what she leaves behind and completely aware of what she goes to, returns to Osmond to accept the complete responsibility of the choice she made when she married him—when in her own eyes she performed “the most serious act—the single sacred act—of her life.”

How extraordinarily different *The Portrait of a Lady* is from *Pride and Prejudice*, published a short sixty-eight years before it. Jane Austen’s novel dramatizes the ultimate actualization of Elizabeth’s individual fulfillment in her accommodation to a viable social norm. Henry James’s novel dramatizes the inability of an individual to find any fulfillment outside the life she has created for herself. It dramatizes the failure of society to provide a matrix for individual human happiness.

In *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth Bennet makes a mistake that she finally rectifies. She misjudges Darcy because her prejudice against him leads her to misunderstand a series of incidents in which she is involved. But by refusing to marry Darcy the first time he proposes, she does not irrevocably create a destiny for herself. Rather her destiny is created for her by his letter, by their accidental meeting at Pemberley, by her sister Lydia’s elopement, and by Darcy’s generosity. The mistake of one day does not press upon Elizabeth for the rest of her life. Rather the mistake of that day brings her directly, in the middle of *Pride and Prejudice*, to a realization of her personal faults, to an understanding of her life, and to an awareness of her character in relation to a reasonable norm according to which men are good or bad. Therefore, by the time the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* has reached its midpoint, its heroine is realized as a total and integral human being. After this moment of realization, Elizabeth has to hang on and suffer, not because of herself but because of others. The consequences of her first rejection of Darcy are temporary and beneficial. The rejection brings both of them to a realization of their relation to true humanity. Just as that realization overpowers Elizabeth’s prejudice, it overpowers Darcy’s pride. Then a series of incidents over which Elizabeth has no control reunites them on the bases of understanding, empathy, and love. The novel, then, ends not only with the total individual development of each character but also with his total social development, because personal love is satisfied in marriage and harmonized with society. The most divergent elements in society come to recognize the reasonableness of the marriage and give it their blessing. Darcy and Elizabeth are assumed into their social order and become exemplars of it in their reasonable and loving marriage.

In a society that has reason for its ideal for action and has marriage as its ideal for personal fulfillment, it is eminently suitable that plot should predominate, for plot in Jane Austen embodies an ideal. It is so constructed that the characters confront situations that force to the fore the human values that are held to be most important. Therefore, through a complex series of interwoven incidents, Elizabeth and Darcy are shown acting irrationally, coming to an awareness of their defection from reasonable conduct, experiencing events which enable them to empathize with each other, falling in love, and marrying. The society that Jane Austen depicted in *Pride and Prejudice* made it possible for her to write a novel with a plot developing incidents that showed characters achieving, in every good sense, a societal ideal. The

same is not true for the society that James portrays in *The Portrait of a Lady*.

Like Elizabeth, Isabel Archer makes a mistake in judgment; but unlike Elizabeth, she cannot rectify it. Isabel chooses Osmond, and her fate is sealed. With that choice and her fidelity to it, she creates her destiny. Just as Elizabeth made a mistake in judgment before she completely knew herself, so too does Isabel. But Isabel does not get a second chance. Nor does Isabel have a total sense of individual realization until the end of *The Portrait*. There she completely realizes the meaning of the alternatives and chooses the one of responsibility, once again creating for herself the life she will lead. Isabel, therefore, at the end of her novel reaches a point of total realization that comes for Elizabeth in the middle of *Pride and Prejudice*. And this is fitting because for Isabel there is to be no social realization in a reasonable and loving marriage; rather there is to be only the individual realization of integrity in lonely and patient suffering.

It should be clear that it was eminently impossible for James to write a novel like *The Portrait of a Lady* by employing a conventional plot. The society pictured in the novel, while mannered and highly organized, could hardly give significance to an individual because it provided no norm for individual rightness. A complicated series of incidents arising from social aberrations could hardly exist; for while an aberration might be recognized socially, it would not be recognized morally. The social and the moral are not coterminal in *The Portrait* as they are in *Pride and Prejudice*. Therefore, for James, a novel could hardly compose into a unit of social and individual harmony as it ended. Clearly he needed to emphasize the individual creating values for himself as he encountered life at large. And what better way than through a series of choices? As a character chooses, he composes his life. Somewhat like an artist, the character makes his life by selecting from the elements available to him. Which brings me more precisely to the point.

For James, one's personal life itself is a work of art. To have a vision of life, to choose elements to actualize that vision, to abide by the choice that one has made is to create something beautiful and valuable in the midst of chaos. The act of the individual is akin to the act of the artist. Listen a moment to James as he talks about the act of creation:

Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent *value* with which alone it is concerned, sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference here, however, is that while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in *his* tiny nugget, washed free of awkward accretions and hammered into a sacred hardness, the very stuff for a clear affirmation, the happiest chance for the indestructible.

Life at large is a mass of unstructured waste, yet there lurks in it some value. The artist has to seek out that value and form with it something yet more valuable. And what the artist does, so must each human being do when

he confronts the confusion of life at large. For James, in another context, "It is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance," and he knows of "no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process."⁷

What we find in *The Portrait of a Lady* is a system of value akin to James's view of art. Isabel has a vision of what her life should be and takes steps to avoid incorporating in it things that are not part of that vision—for instance, marriage to Warburton or Goodwood. She chooses Osmond because she thinks that they can live together a beautiful and meaningful life. Isabel's reflections prove this to be the case:

Hadn't he all the appearance of a man living in the open air of the world, indifferent to small considerations, caring only for truth and knowledge and believing that two intelligent people ought to look for them together and, whether they found them or not, find at least some happiness in the search? He had told her he loved the conventional; but there was a sense in which this seemed a noble declaration. In that sense, that of the love of harmony and order and decency and of all the stately offices of life, she went with him freely, and his warning had contained nothing ominous. But when, as the months had elapsed, she had followed him further and he had led her into the mansion of his own habitation, then, *then* she had seen where she really was.

Isabel has made a mistake. Nevertheless, she has committed herself by the sacred act with which she sought to make her vision of life actual. Now she cannot repudiate it. Within her vision of life, fidelity to the choices by which she seeks to make that vision real becomes important. The vision of the possibility life offered was not wrong, and one must be faithful to the choices that were made to implement the vision. Indeed, all the moral chaos that Isabel experiences comes from infidelity: from Osmond's to his wife and Madame Merle, from Madame Merle's to Mrs. Touchett and to Pansy. So Isabel Archer as the artist of her own life rescues from her vision some actuality that will deny neither its original value nor the meaning of her acts in relation to that value. She does this by her fidelity to a single sacred act of her life by which she tried to make her vision real and by her fidelity to her promise to Pansy. For Isabel Archer the decision to return to Rome is the final act of self-creation, an act of truth, an act of the artist placing rightly the final element required for integrity. Isabel places it in full knowledge of the suffering it will entail and the responsibility it will incur. But she places it, also, in full knowledge of the fact that to choose otherwise would be to destroy herself.

Confronted like many another modern writer with the complexity and diversity of society, with its secular culture and its religious skepticism, its worship of money and position, James placed the center of value in the individual's ability to intuit life's possibility and to seek that possibility in reality. Most often the result of such vision and action is paradoxical because life at

large will not allow the more beautiful possibility actually to exist. We have only to think of Hyacinth Robinson in *The Princess Casamassima*, Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton*, Nanda Brookenham in *The Awkward Age*: each sees how beautiful life can be if society will allow a set of circumstances to exist. But each of these admirable characters is denied the realization of his vision by others. Fidelity to his vision drives Hyacinth to suicide; the failure of the Gereths and the Brigstocks leaves Fleda desolate and alone; and the insensitiveness of the society that has made an innocent girl unacceptable to it forces Nanda to leave that society and live quietly away from it. Each character is matured in suffering. Each, in a sense, is a martyr to his faith in the rightness of the possibility he foresaw.

In *The Portrait of a Lady* we see Isabel Archer looking steadfastly at life at large, intuiting a possibility for personal fulfillment, striving to make her vision actual, and finally abiding by the reality of her acts. Her position in the face of life at large is just the opposite of that of Elizabeth Bennet, who faces life knowing what it actually offers and who must make actual in herself the existing virtues of the social order. In *Pride and Prejudice* the meaning of life is stable and real, and Elizabeth has only to share in it. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel must create a vision of life and strive to make it actual for herself. For James, the imaginative faculty, so dangerous in Jane Austen's novel, attains supreme value because it enables the character to intuit the possibility of his own wholeness and integrity. Moreover, since pursuit is the consequence of vision, it involves one personally with the ache of the actual. For James, as for Kierkegaard before him, the imaginative becomes a way to the real: "*The imagination is what providence uses in order to get men into reality, into existence, to get them far enough out, or in, or down in existence. And when imagination has helped them as far out as they are meant to go—that is where reality, properly speaking, begins.*"⁸

¹ *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York, 1957), p. 326.

² The words describing a plot are those of Herbert L. Hughes, *Theory and Practice of Henry James* (Michigan, 1926), p. 35.

³ A more comprehensive discussion of James's concept of *action* can be found in Joseph Wiesenfarth, *Henry James and the Dramatic Analogy* (New York, 1963), pp. 19-23.

⁴ *The Future of the Novel*, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1956), pp. 9f.

⁵ Quoted in Walter Allen, ed., *Writers on Writing* (New York, 1959), p. 147.

⁶ *The Portrait of a Lady*, ed. Leon Edel (Boston: Riverside Editions, n. d.), pp. 349f.

⁷ A letter to H. G. Wells, dated 10 July 1915, and reprinted in Naomi Lebowitz, ed., *Discussions of Henry James* (Boston, 1962), p. 7.

⁸ *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, trans. and ed. Alexander Dru (New York, 1959), p. 243.

Remnant

• Carol Setterlund

Three times the helicopter came from the city. Like a hawk waiting for the remains, it hovered over them, watching for his sign. It came the first time in the early morning, just after he'd heard the weather report. He paid it no heed, did not even look up, engrossed as he was with thoughts of flood preparation and with watching the land.

Still, without turning his mind to it, he could hear, could even feel, the sound it made in the air. He knew that sometime this day, before the flood was over, he would come to deal with it, but for now he chose not to understand its purpose.

He stood in the rain near the edge of the swollen Eel River, his feet marking the steady, fast rise. The ocean's morning tide was going out, and he had hoped to see the river receding with it, but he was not really surprised to find that it wasn't happening yet. Few floods had delivered themselves with the slow heavy intensity he had seen precede this year's flood, and few summers had been so miserably dry as the last, so that he had sensed his hope for an early retreat would prove worthless. Watching the water during the last few days, he had felt something akin to an omen, like a silent speaking of God to Noah; and each day, the sense of something undone had grown within him.

He knew that the crest of the flood would come during the day and believed that it would recede with the

change of tide in the afternoon; but the river would cover a lot of ground before that time, and he needed a younger man's faith to believe that the coming hours would not ruin him. Too many dreams he had watched die, had even helped to kill.

Already the river had spread back two fields deep, submerging all but the last of the beets and, to the east of him, covering the alfalfa. Soon it would reach the second fence and would spread over the carrots, and after the carrots, the potatoes, and then the barn.

When the sound of the helicopter died, he raised his head to weigh and examine what he saw. The trees were a heavy bruised green from the days of rain. Always green with the year-round dampness, they looked overwhelmingly ominous now, as if even they threatened to turn and cave in on him. He was surrounded by nature. Mountains rose around him to the north and hills to the south. His land stretched eastward nearly as far as he could see and spread to the west for two miles, where it met the Pacific Ocean.

He imagined this section of Northern California as land unknown to most Americans. Here the air was still clean, and still blew free across the land. But he knew that it would not last. Already some of his neighbors had sold out. Already he had been pressured to sell. The subdividers and builders had stood before him with their checkbooks in their hands.

"We need your land," they said.

"Build 'em higher in San Francisco," he had answered, his gruffness a bluff, the presence of his children strong in his mind.

"Sell out, Pa. It's a lousy way to live." In those words he had understood that the time would come when rows of prefabs would stretch across his land. He wondered briefly what form of waste the builders would find for the lower flood lands or if the Government would come to the aid of progress; then he pushed the image away, bringing back the older, closer things.

The sound of the ocean's muffled roar reached his stomach.

"Do you hear God whispering across the ocean?" he had asked his children time after time, wanting, needing them to hear it exactly as he heard it.

Ann, hands in her jacket pockets, bored, her hair lifted by the sea breeze. "I only hear the ocean."

Robert. "Hell's sake, Pa," the cold mysterious hatred in his voice and face.

He looked down and was surprised to find that the water had covered the toes of his boots. In his mind he let it move over the land. The ocean tide soon would cease its outward movement and would bring the rush heavy upon his land; yet it was the afternoon low which he most feared, and uppermost in his thoughts was support for the barn at that time. He made a mental note of ropes, of the layout of trees for support, remembering with a nagging anxiety the lack of trees on the eastern side of the barn.

There was much to do, cows to be brought in and milked while he still had electricity, the support fixed for the barn, and support, also, between

the barn and corral. He set out to work, hurrying the cows into the barn. The rain ran off his slicker in streams, heavier all the time now.

Inside the barn, he heard the rain hammer on the roof; it made him conscious every minute of the advancing time. He loved his barn, loved the hollow feeling of age, the weathered brown of the unpainted wood, the ropeswing hanging near the hayloft, long unused now.

He brushed the wet sleeve of his raincoat across the side of his face and began again to work. He slipped the milking machines on the cows, one, then another down the two rows and remembered years ago when he'd done the milking by hand and enjoyed it more then; but to appease the family, he had let this much of machinery into his work. Yet he would rather have stood alone, without help; the noisy grunt of the machines kept him from hearing the ocean's roar, stopped the gentleness in his mind.

From the eye-level windows he could watch the river, and he saw now that the water had risen past the second fence and reached upward now on the fence posts. Within fifteen minutes it would rise over the first large knoll and spread again toward him. Then, from behind the window, he saw the first fence begin to move with the water.

He fed the cows in their stalls and hurried out into the corral deck, weighing in his mind the safest possibilities. The logical thing was to put the cows on the hill above the house, where they might be lost but would not drown. Yet he wanted them nearby, and he told himself he could put them on the corral and move them later if the need demanded. He cleaned the corral and spread hay

around for the cows to eat and chaff for them to sleep on.

When he had put the cows out on the corral, he went back to the tins of milk, opened one and leaned his nose into it, then dipped a tin cup into it and drank. He poured a bucketful for the house and then put the tins on the wheelbarrow and wheeled the milk down the fields to the river.

He watched the whiteness spread into the muddy water, at first in a large clump and very white; then as it reached out with crooked arms, he saw it diluted and swallowed up by the rising water.

All sign of beets and carrots and most of the alfalfa was gone now. The water spread four fields deep, and, looking at it, he felt the bitterness rise in him. For what, all this work? For what, anything, if not for sons?

When he came back to the barn, he cleaned the equipment and began carting it to the hill behind the house. Before long he would have to bring the cows up there also, but he liked the thought of them in the corral that he had built himself board by board.

The copter came again at noon. The hours had gone quickly for him, and it passed through his head that it was still early morning. He looked at his watch and lifted his head from his work for a moment but gave the copter no sign that he knew what it wanted. It rose and lowered again, waiting.

He saw that the water was spreading rapidly backwards now with more and more force. Already it had reached into the potato fields and soon would surround the barn.

Hurriedly, he gathered up all the rope he could find and tied the ends of three lengths of it to the timbers at the corral's base, then ran the oth-

er ends to the three cedars on the west side of the barn. As he worked, he could hear the copter still above him; then, at last, he heard it leave.

He sought into his mind for an idea for support for the barn from the east side; yet he knew the seeking was futile. Finally, he let it be, and went inside to clean the manure from the barn. As he walked, he ran his fingers over the old boards. Every nail, every board, he'd put together himself, and the barn had been strong and sturdy in its time. Old now, though, it was no longer sturdy. The rain came through the roof in many places, and each drop splattering on the floor made his fear more conscious.

The air in the barn was suddenly changed, and he understood that his wife stood beside him.

"The helicopter?"

"Gone," he answered. "I think we'll be safe. At least for a while yet. It'll be back again in any case." He turned to see her brown eyes questioning him.

"The water will reach the house this time?"

He glanced out the window to where all the world was water. The end of all spacious land? All old flesh? But why here? Was his world so wanting?

"I expect so," he answered. "Did you take some of the things from the house up onto the hill?"

"No."

"You should." He knew that she wouldn't, couldn't bring herself to.

"Yes."

"Put a pot of coffee on. I'll be up in a little while."

She stood for a moment in the window, looking west to where he knew she could see a bit of the ocean; then she turned toward the house, and he

saw the stiffness in her face, the small twist across her mouth.

Kneeling at the door he hammered boards, which he'd torn from the stalls, to the corral and to the barn floor. The river had reached the edge of the barn now, and as he worked he could see it moving higher and higher. Let it be, he thought. Leave the barn and take the cows to higher land. No stranger to floods, he knew the signs, knew that this flood would surpass even the highest one of years before.

He was drenched clear through and numb with cold. The rain splashed on the boards under his fingers and hit against the sides of his face, running down his neck and inside the slicker.

After he'd hammered the last board, he stood up to watch the water and saw that the ominous stillness was disappearing. In the center, the water was rough and growing fiercer. Near the barn, the movement had begun to come to the surface, the force from underneath beginning to break through, growing and building.

He put his tools and all the small things he could find onto the highest shelves in the barn and stacked the hay as high as he could. When he went back out on the corral, he found he had to leave the barn. The water nearly surrounded him.

He dragged his boots through the mud up to the house and stopped at the porch to calculate the water again. His watch told him that it was three o'clock, and by the way the water was moving, he was certain it would reach the house by four.

Inside, the warmth filled him, made him realize how really cold he'd been. His fingers and toes ached from the sudden change. He wrapped his

hands around his coffee cup until they stung.

When he finished his coffee, he moved his chair over by the window to watch the flood. His vigil relaxed him, and he felt his eyes disengage from his mind and his mind became suspended. The water had surrounded the barn and was reaching upward, much closer now, but it was as if it would never reach.

Before him was the dusty summer of the year before.

Robert. "I got to get on with it, Pa."

"What about me? You owe me something."

"I got to go, Pa." He remembered the closed mouth, the stiff, sullen jaw.

"All right! It's done!" But it was not yet over inside him. Nor did Robert go just then but hesitated, growing more and more sullen. Well, no blessing he'd get to go to the city, and finally he'd gone without, Ann following soon after; and the August dust and dryness settled around the farm as though all that was left for it was his own grave.

Suddenly, the beginning of a thought brought him from the suspended state. The chair fell to the floor as he jumped up, and he swore with helpless fury.

"What?" his wife asked.

"The cows. Meant to let them go on the hill if the water got this high. Too late now." Silently he cursed his possessiveness. He hated himself bitterly for his faults and for their rule over him, and he wished deeply to be free of them. To the growing water around him, to the lessening, diminishing space, there was suddenly something that needed desperately to be said, some last sound which might save the world from water.

"It's four o'clock," his wife said.

Eventually they went out onto the porch to watch until the flood waters moved in on them, forcing them up on the hill.

Below them, the barn was nearly half submerged, and the water had reached to the cows' bellies. Then, at once, the air and the water turned calm. He breathed deeply, felt his lungs expand and hold, while the fear ran shivering through him. Instinctively he knew the tide had turned, and, without doubt, the river moved with it to the west and with steadily increasing speed.

Then the barn moved, rose enough so that he knew it had left its foundations. For a moment he could smell the cedar and fir, hear the hammering as it went up under his hands. It hung, swaying slightly—"No, no," he breathed—then slowly, easily, gracefully gave in to the river. Like the sailboats which he'd seen his son put into the edge of the river, it began gently, easily, to float out toward the sea.

When it passed the trees to which it was tied and reached the end of the rope, it tore loose from the corral, and the corral held for a brief tearing second. The cows, themselves motionless, were pitiful and grotesque to him.

He watched as the corral bobbed and twisted and finally pulled loose from the ropes. Then barn, corral, and cows rolled and bobbed slowly in all directions.

"Poor dumb fools," he said softly with infinite pity. It was too easy and all too physically removed from himself. It was wrong that there was no furious motion, no fight, no speed. In a way he felt that he had been cheated, sneaked up on, and beaten

without a fight. And with nothing tangible that he could fight, he knew for the first time the need to bow to an ultimate strength, to the passage of time's inevitability.

A remnant he was of a time gone by, a leftover from an era of farmers and land lovers, of strong, independent, and possessive men and quiet, gentle women. Betrayed by God, by children, and by his own nature.

All right, he thought.

Overhead, the helicopter buzzed the third time and lowered near them. His wife was looking up watching it and waiting for his word.

He turned again to the water. In the distance he saw the heads of two cows still above water. He watched them for a long time, and after they had disappeared into the sea, he watched still longer for them to reappear.

"There's little left," his wife said. "Do you want to go?"

Below him, the land was lonely and terrible to his eyes. Only the house stood, surrounded by the slowly receding water. No crops, no barn—put together board by board—no cattle. He knew he was beaten, that he would have to sell at least a portion of land in order to live, and that there was nothing left but the process of living it out.

"No," he answered. "And they can bury us here when we die."

The copter hovered over him, chopping the air. He looked up and waved to free the machine. Pointing toward the east with an aging and weathered forefinger, he removed himself from the flow of time.

The pilot watched him. He could see the face above him, and he shook his head and moved his hand, open-palmed now, in a final wave of dismissal.

"Back to the city, you young bird,"
he said softly. "Do not hurry me."

The copter, freed now, swung its
body upward and, geared again to

motion, lifted and swung away. He
watched to see if it would make some
gesture of farewell to him, but it did
not.

The Haircutting

• Lionel D. Wyld

We cut her hair today.
The pony-tail and braid are gone.
So long it seems she wore the curly lengths
Of blondness down her back:
Now it's not the same, and yet
Progress never is, nor growing up—
Long hair might hinder that.
She helped to put a lock of it away,
Then raced off to play a grown-up tune,
Leaving the envelope with us.

Poem

• Kenneth Bernard

clairvoyant and penurious
so describes my grandfather
who trained eagles
for flight into the sun

I remember chunks of meat
he fondly fed and bade
farewell to them their
sharp beaks glistening
and the blood that oozed
from scratches as they shot
straight and high

it crusted
into thin membranes
on human volcano

red lava
burst out his mouth
the day he died

and the sun so hot
never since

Contributors

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Manuscripts and other correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, **four quarters**, La Salle College, Philadelphia 41, Pa. Manuscripts should be typed double spaced and should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Annual Subscription: Two Dollars.
